

Watch The Professionals Handle This (and don't forget to scream)

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by [Arcxus](#)

Summary

This is related to my first fic, "It's Not the Destination (But The People You Save Along The Way)" that's a bit of a canon rewrite / fix-it with a sprinkling of more. Read that first for context, just the first chapter is enough. This? This is my escape from plotting angst with ridiculous future crack set in that same verse.

Each chapter will be a standalone "episode," and I'll update sporadically as the mood hits.

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“Today we’ll be visiting the infamous ‘Sally House,’” Jin Zixuan recited, surprisingly the best public speaker out of all of them. Wei Ying went off topic. Lan Zhan was a block of stubborn ice. Jiang Cheng said ‘fuck’ too much. “Because when it comes to supernatural phenomena in modern times, it’s easily faked. Therefore, we’ll be going in with actual talismans and cultivation practices from our heritage and testing if its,” he inhaled deeply, “Fact or cap. I hate that. Who wrote this script?”

“I did!”

Jin Zixuan looked pained. “Of course you did. Of course you had to include that.”

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(Or, a death god, immortal boyfriend, immortal brother, and idiot brother-in-law go ghost hunting)

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

The video blurred for all of a blink before melting into focus, showing the inside of their car as they sped along the highway. Wei Ying's grinning face took up most of the screen, though a heartbeat later, he angled it to show Lan Zhan at the wheel, and a grumpy Jiang Cheng in the back. Jin Zixuan (who had been lucky enough to dodge having to use his birth name of "Jin Duan" by some lucky, lucky force of karma) remained unbothered, blithely watching the BuzzFeed Unsolved episode that had taken place at this same infamous Sally House.

"Why are we doing this again?" He asked, "It's been several centuries and your ideas are just as bad as the first life, Wei Wuxian."

"The first life you barely remember!" Wei Ying chided, unbothered. "As cultivators, we need to educate the public on what *proper* ghost hunting is, or they'll think us all morons. Imagine: the tragedy! Hanguang-Jun's historical record blemished with the fact that come the turn of the 21st century, most labelled him a lunatic and left it! I can't let that happen to Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan deserves the world~"

"Wei Ying is my world," Lan Zhan replied, practiced in replying to such ridiculous, adorable words. It was especially worth it when Wei Ying blushed so prettily when caught of guard, such as right now.

"Lan Zhan, you need to warn me before saying such things!"

"Don't fucking say anything," Jiang Cheng interrupted. "You two are fucking *disgusting*,"

"Mn." Lan Wangji agreed, pleased.

About 3000 years ago, the infamous Yiling Patriarch and his partner, Hanguang-Jun were said to have cultivated immortality... and then completely and utterly disappeared, out of reach of any records (though, certainly, historians and devoutly obsessed follower wannabes definitely *tried*.) That's what history knows, anyways. The truth... is a little different. See, Lan Wangji and Wei Wuxian had indeed cultivated immortality, and then had gotten hounded by the many requests of the common folk that they believed immortals could solve. Jiang Cheng had laughed at them, initially, amused at Wei Ying's requests to hide them in Lotus Pier until the mob disappeared and whatnot.

But then hubris bit him in the ass as well (in a rather poetic way, in Wei Ying's opinion) when Jiang Cheng himself accidentally acquired immortality through a rather stressful night-hunt event, wherein "nearly dying and desperate enough to agree to let your death deity brother try something experimental" was the one condition that needed to be met in order for him to join said idiot brother and his insufferable husband amongst the ranks of the enlightened.

Lan Xichen had joined them years later, surprising no one, and for a long time it was just the four of them, watching the world change in fantastical, strange, and oftentimes uncomfortable ways and doing their best to adapt with the times. Then, about a thousand years from their time, they ran into the reincarnations of Jiang Fengmain and Yu Ziyuan... and Jiang Yanli. It was then, Wei Ying decided, he wanted to offer this chance to the others who'd surely

reincarnated as well. Cultivation was a dying art, but neither Wei Ying nor Jiang Cheng wanted to lose their sister again.

Perhaps it was a selfish wish, but Jiang Yanli was still a saint who understood her long-lived brothers despite remembering only feelings from her first life, which slowly trickled into memories as her cultivation improved, and her body grew strong enough to handle it. It was her who roped Jin Zixuan into their whole project, to her brothers' endless complaints and Lan Wangji's amusement. It was even worse when, much to the contritement of both parties, Wei Wuxian and Jin Zixuan *got along*, much like the hate-friendship Lan Wanji and Jiang Cheng ended up sporting.

Though they tried, Lan Sizhui simply had no desire to reach immortality, content to live with Jin Ling and Lan Jingyi until they returned to the reincarnation cycle about three hundred years from when they were born. And then, every time since, Wei Wuxian and Lan Wangji sought out their son, who seemed unable to lose the theme of becoming an orphan. It was a gift, in Wei Ying's opinion, to be able to raise their child several times, though he was sad to let them go in the end. Despite knowing the full story, Sizhui had chosen to die peacefully in his last two lives.

Jin Ling, on the other hand, who had become Sizhui's cultivation partner in their second lives, had angrily called bullshit in his grief and chased immortality so that the next time Sizhui reincarnated *he'd* do the convincing. He made the mistake, however, of reaching that point earlier than all the others, so it was still fair ground to call him the youngest. Wei Ying didn't think he minded, though. Seeing Yanli, Zixuan and Jin Ling getting to be a family for once was a gift he didn't think he'd get to experience, didn't think *they'd* get to experience.

Which brings them to present day: the year 2021, about 3000 years from the distant memories of their first lives, and into a side gig of ghost hunting as they masquerade as university students in order to get their respective degrees renewed.

"I still think it's stupid that we have to go back to school for things we already know," Wei Ying muttered, sinking back into the car seat like a slinky. He almost — almost — put his feet on the dash before remembering this was *Lan Zhan's car*, and if he did that he'd probably end up doing chores alone for a week.

There are a few things Lan Zhan would deprive Wei Ying of, but after seeing the *price* of cars these days, Lan Zhan had put his foot down. Quite literally.

... but only after he'd found a car luxurious and fast enough to make up for the fact that flying on swords was very much illegal. Many, many things had changed. Lan Zhan held the opinion that not all were for the better.

"Mn. More knowledge. Know more about the human body than people thousands of years ago — updating makes sense."

"Ugh," Wei Ying groaned. "It makes sense, but I still think it's stupid."

"Says the person acing all his classes," Jiang Cheng said scathingly, without heat. "They've come up with so many laws these last hundred years that it's like memorizing the Gusu Lan

rules all over again. I'm getting fucking *flashbacks*. ”

“Ohhhh,” Wei Ying winced. “Ohh yeah, you went into Law this time, didn’t you?”

"Yep." Jiang Cheng said, and was quiet for a moment before muttering, saltily, “I’m Not At All Reassured that the one attempting a biochemistry ph.D with a simultaneous side study into disease and pathogens is calling law hard. Has called law hard. *Multiple times*.”

Lan Zhan made a noise that sounded suspiciously like a snort. Wei Ying laughed outright.

“Law is hard.” Jin Zixuan agreed. He’d know. He was working as a police investigator these days, but he’d ended up taking similar criminal law courses as Jiang Cheng, and fought a shudder at the sheer amount of memorization. “And,” he said, giving them all the stink eye, “Here is another piece of footage we cannot use, because none of us can talk without referencing our pasts in a way that makes us seem like lunatics.”

“The bar is literally on the floor,” Jiang Cheng sniped, grinning. "And Wei Ying brought a shovel."

“A-Chengggggg,” Wei Ying whined, turning his camera off and fiddling to delete the file. This had been the third attempt. “A-Cheng is mean. Lan Zhan, I’m being bullied! Save your poor husband, Hanguang-Jun!”

“Wei Ying loves his brother.” Lan Wangji said, serene, though his gold eyes had the glint of someone who took far too much pleasure in being a little shit these days. “and his brother’s only love language is violence. Emotional retardation is truly a tragedy.”

“Hey!” Jiang Cheng protested, and then rolled his eyes. “Like you have any room to talk, Repression-Bearing-Lord. Wei Wuxian, get it rolling again so we can film, moron. We need footage before we get there.”

“Yes of course Sir. Mr. Sect leader Jiang sir,” Wei Ying said, snickering when Jiang Cheng actually growled.

“I hate you," He hissed.

“I know didi, I know.” The infamous Yiling Patriarch crooned, miming patting his brother's head, and then pressed ‘record.’ “And we’re rolling,” he said, grinning at the lens, just wide enough for viewers to see how his teeth remained a tad too sharp. He picked up his camera and moved it, showing the two in the back seat. “Alright, Zixuan, give us the details!”

“Today we’ll be visiting the infamous ‘Sally House,’” Jin Zixuan recited, surprisingly the best public speaker out of all of them. Wei Ying went off topic. Lan Zhan was a block of stubborn ice. Jiang Cheng said ‘fuck’ too much. “Because when it comes to supernatural phenomena in modern times, it’s easily faked. Therefore, we’ll be going in with actual talismans and cultivation practices from our heritage and testing if its,” he inhaled deeply, “Fact or cap. I hate that. Who wrote this script?”

“I did!”

Jin Zixuan looked pained. “Of course you did. Of course you had to include that.”

“Wei Wuxian, your scripts suck.” Jiang Cheng grouched, then turned to the camera. “Alright fuckers, for the new people: this is Wei Ying behind the camera, and he’s our resident medium cum idiot.”

Wei Ying made a ‘pfft’ noise. “Heh. Cum.”

“Case. In. Fucking. Point.” Jiang Cheng said, reaching to hit him (lightly) on the head with *Sandu*, making the camera shake. “As you can see, my dick of a brother lacks braincells. So his boyfriend, Lan Zhan, also a medium, is the one who’s in charge of those.”

“Mn.” Lan Wanji hummed, agreeing.

“I’m Jiang Cheng, and I’m the... best word in english for it is exorcist? I nerf the fuckers. That’s Jin Zixuan, he makes sure we don’t end up in jail for illegal trespassing.”

“And we thank you for your service,” Lan Zhan and Wei Ying chorused, in monotone, making Jin Zixuan cover his face with his hand. This had become tradition after Yanli told them to be grateful. Was it genuine? Maybe halfway. Was it funny? Absolutely.

"Why do I even join these trips?" Jin Zixuan sighed.

“Boredom is one hell of a drug!” Wei Ying chirped, turning the camera back around, “Anyways~ How’s everyone feeling? Annoyed, scared, maybe a little murderous? Think we’ll find something?”

“Maybe,” Jin Zixuan shrugged. “The flashlight stuff was pretty damning.”

“Yeah but if you watched the fucking post mortem you’d be able to see why it was so fucking easy,” Jiang Cheng countered.

“It responded to what they said.” Lan Zhan pointed out. “Then went crazy.”

“Ah. Yeah that bit.”

“Still don’t think it’s anything fucking useful.”

“Aww you guys aren’t any fun! Maybe we’ll run into a real resentful ghost this time,” Wei Ying pouted, and then grinned at the camera. “As you can see, these fools and my amazing Lan Zhan are pretty skeptical! Here’s to hoping the Sally House proves them all wrong~” He chirped, then turned the camera off. “Alrighty, how far are we out?”

“Half an hour.” Lan Zhan reported.

“Let’s get food,” Jiang Cheng suggested. “KFC.”

“Anything but KFC.” Jin Zixuan objected. “There’s so many better places for chicken.”

“Yeah, but KFC is cheap as shit.” Wei Ying pointed out.

Jin Zixuan looked at the Jiang brothers, knowing full well he'd just been conned. "I'll pay," He glared, "as long as we don't go to KFC."

"Deal."

"Deal!"

"Mn."

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The house they arrived at looked painfully normal. Almost mundanely so. Wei Ying handed his phone to Lan Zhan, who'd be their designated cameraman for the night.

"Hello viewers!" He crooned, giving the lens a sunny smile. He then met Lan Zhan's gaze, and his husband gave him a nod, then raised his hand in the most Lan-like of thumbs ups to indicate that the stream was live and they were rolling.

> Hgttbght: AYY YILING LAOZU IS LIVE

> MuffinKing: YLLZ Spooks night?

> 69Sans69: SPOOKS NIGHT

> Hgttbght: SPOOKS NIGHT

> Cattolyn: !! SPOOKS NIGHT !!

> Revvio: Y'all are fucking LOUD

> Hgttbght: SPOOKS NIGHT

"Well!" Wei Ying grinned. "Chat is certainly lively. For new viewers, we like to livestream the actual ghost hunting part of things, so you all get the full experience that this? All of this? Happening live, no special effects whatsoever."

"Also we're fucking broke," Jiang Cheng cut in. "Like all of you. Zixuan isn't, so he's designated sugar daddy."

Lan Zhan simply glanced over, agreeing. He was perfectly content to be stingy as all fuck unless he was spending money on Wei Wuxian, given how inflation rates had risen. Wei Ying was still, surprisingly, better about the money, though. Wei Ying didn't buy \$500 000 dollar sports cars, a fact they all loved to hold over Lan Zhan's head.

Lan Zhan didn't care. The speed of the car made Wei Ying very happy, as planned.

"I didn't agree to this." Jin Zixuan protested, to deaf ears.

Wei Wuxian sniggered. "Come onnnn. You're bougie as fuck. You wore Air Force Ones while ghost hunting."

"You did." Jiang Cheng muttered.

"They're perfectly comfortable shoes." Jin Zixuan said, glancing down, and then glaring at the judgement he received from the Jiang siblings.

“Remember the investigation.” Lan Zhan warned, and motioned for Wei Ying to step inside. The rest of them followed, knowing better than to argue with Hanguang-Jun.

All of them except Zixuan, in Wei Ying’s esteemed opinion, were wearing perfectly serviceable ghost hunting clothes. They all tended to lean more towards modernized hanfu and street fashion, finding comfort in the mildly familiar cut of the clothes.

Wei Wuxian was absolutely *rocking* a shredded black band tee that was now a crop top, ripped black skinny jeans, leather straps and belts he’d put on as he wanted -- they *did* come in handy, truly! He could use the studs to attach pouches and other night hunting gear -- combat boots and a top reminiscent of the robe he wore as the Yiling Laozu, now erased from history, and only truly alive as his online counterpart.

He’d done up his hair the same way, though the undercut definitely helped with how thick it had once been. He was still a resentful living ghost-deity-thing playing human, and felt it no differently than so long ago. In an odd way, it had been a comfort. Twirling *Chenqing* between his too pale, too sharp fingers, he glanced over at his companions as they entered the house, fully judging their clothes as well.

Lan Zhan, sweet Lan Zhan, looked absolutely perfect in his long, loose white pants tied high on his waist, baby blue sweater with bunnies over a silvery shirt, both tucked in. He also wore a hanfu top, though this one Wei Ying knew was a gift from his brother, who’d (with Yanli’s help) embroidered those cloud designs, so woven with nostalgia. Lan Zhan had nearly cried receiving such a precious gift. He wore it now because it had been charmed, too.

Both of us are in character tonight, Wei Wuxian thought, grinning as his eyes adjusted to the light.

> Revvio: YLLZ is wearing those stupid red contacts again
> Revvio: How the FUCK do they glow? Bitch gonna be blind
> LaozuSimp: Bitch could be blind and I’d still thirst
> MuffinKing: He’s a taken man
> Revvio: @LaozuSimp you fucking discust me
> LaozuSimp: discust
> Revvio: fuck off
> Cattolyn: Children, *behave*

Jiang Cheng, on the other hand, was fully embracing the threat he became when dressed in a studded leather jacket and similarly goth clothes. His shirt had a snake motif (he was *obsessed*, Wei Ying figured, But if Xichen kept indulging him then that was between his emotionally repressed didi and the poor man recently crushing on him). He had a bad habit of letting lightning spark when he got spooked, which the viewers all thought was some sort of LED effect on the jacket.

Jiang Cheng once got into a six hour argument with a skeptic in chat that started *while they were streaming*, and after that wholeass *mess*, no one questioned the authenticity of Sandu Shengshou again. Both he and Wei Ying proudly wore their clarity bells, too, and refused to answer viewer questions about them just to mess with them. Just a little.

And Jin Zixuan never learns, Wei Ying mused, looking at his fool brother-in-law who wore a white shirt and a pale yellow Gucci sweater, grey Michael Kors pants and fucking pristine, white Air Force Ones while fucking *ghost hunting*. The rest of them had gear, talismans, and their spiritual weapons (and oh, it was such a relief to be able to cultivate with Suibian again), and Zixuan had a basic sword and shoes more expensive than Wei Ying's filming gear.

Well.

Wei Ying also knew that Jin Zixuan was also the only one who was good at keeping their family (barely) on the opulent side of middle class in this modern nightmare, so Wei Ying supposed that he got a pass for now. At least until Lan Zhan finally, *finally* gets certified as a doctor.

But back to ghost hunting.

Wei Ying let his shadows stretch out and explore the entirety of the house, closing his eyes and humming lightly, fully trusting Lan Zhan to lead him through the entryway and living room so he could simply sense what was here.

- > Cattolyn: Ohh YLLZ is doing his creepy sensing thing
- > Revvio: I cant tell if hes high or faking it
- > Cattolyn: Could be real
- > Revvio: Press x to doubt

And what he got back... *Ahh, well. This is new.*

The house had been long left alone by any talented medium for a long, long time. They all knew the story, about how the house is said to be haunted by restless spirits that were drawn there for some unnamed reason. In an oddly terrifying way, Wei Ying found himself being tugged forwards by some unnamed force for a reason he couldn't recall.

Definitely some form of compulsion, he thought, grimacing. *Not enough to affect me, but definitely enough for there to be a tug. Hm. Something is desperate for us to enter, but it's not entirely me... I'm... not the target?*

"Well," Wei Ying said, deceptively light. "There's definitely something in this place."

- > Hgttbght: AYYYYYY
- > Hgttbght: GHOST GHOST GHOST
- > Revvio: Calm yo tits he says this every night

Jiang Cheng glanced sharply in his direction. "What do you mean?"

"Wei Ying?" Lan Zhan asked, mirroring Jiang Cheng's expression. Wei Wuxian would point out how similar they looked, except they'd both hate that, and while he revelled in annoying Jiang Cheng, his husband deserved only good things.

“Ehhh. Hard to say? I’m definitely feeling some kind of compulsion to step further,” He mused out loud. “I’m trying to think about what it could be.”

“What does it feel like?” Jin Zixuan asked, shining a flashlight down the hall. Jin Zixuan and Lan Zhan being the two amongst them who didn’t have any night-sight without obviously using cultivation. After Jiang Cheng's incidental immortality, some things... bled over from Wei Ying's abilities, due to the shared core.

The house was eerily quiet as they all paused, like the air seemed to be holding its breath. None of the lights were on, and doors with plain frames turned into portals into an inky abyss where it would be far too easy for something dangerous to hide. The house itself seemed transformed: a maze of winding paths that weren't grounded in the reality that they knew. Of course, this was simply the resentment warping their perception... but for whatever host of creatures that resided here to produce such dense resentment, it must be well and truly haunted indeed.

Wei Ying glanced around, noting how the flashlight’s beam seemed to illuminate too little, eaten up by the cloying blackness. He turned his bright red gaze first at Jiang Cheng, who gave him a nod, and then to Lan Zhan (and indirectly, the camera) and simply grinned, baring his teeth at whatever had made nest here.

- > Revvio: Is it just me or are yllz’s teeth too sharp again
- > MuffinKing: I still have that theory that none of them are human
- > MuffinKing: Or they’re cosplay freaks
- > MuffinKing: With the long hair and glowing eyes and fake teeth
- > HanguangJUUL: prolly jst cosplay freaks lm ao
- > Revvio: Bruh that nickname is gonna get you smited
- > Cattolyn: *Smote
- > Revvio: Shut up *mom*

“Well, viewers,” Wei Ying began, still grinning as he gestured with Chenqing to the looming hall that stretched in front of them. The red tassel glinted in the light of Zixuan’s flashlight. “I have a bit of a guess of what’s going on here. But first, what do the rest of you feel? Hanguang-Jun, Sandu Shengshou?”

The usage of their titles had begun as a gag, but turns out the viewers *adored* the concept of it, of dressing up as ancient historical figures and traipsing into haunted places and insulting ghosts. Wei Ying didn’t even know why they’d been surprised. It was funny how much Jiang Cheng hated it, though. Initially. Wei Ying was beginning to suspect he was secretly proud, or at least enjoyed the nostalgia.

“Could be a simple malevolent spirit.” Lan Zhan said softly, sharply. “Mother who lost their child. Child in need of parents. A ghost drawing others close, pulling energy from years of layered resentment and failures.”

“Or it’s some kind of hundred-year-spirit,” Jiang Cheng chimed in, because he loved to argue with Lan Zhan on principle. “Yknow, when you leave a haunted doll with a wish in a house where people have died, letting it marinate in the deaths until it starts with a fractured conscience and it grows into something more malevolent.”

“That can *happen?*” Jin Zixuan hissed, “Like that Annabelle from the movie? Jiang Cheng are you fucking kidding me?”

“Ooh, does someone not like dolls?” Wei Ying drawled, only a little bit teasing. He loathed them as well.

Jin Zixuan made a pained face. “Not anymore. I... have a few porcelain figures that are family heirlooms and well over a hundred years old.”

Scratch that, Wei Ying was *delighted*. “Well! If you get murdered in your sleep, now we know why!”

Jin Zixuan rolled his eyes and shined the torch right at Wei Ying’s glowing ones. “Fuck you Wei Wuxian.”

Wei Ying shrieked. “Aiiyahhh Lan Zhannnnnn! Lan Zhan it hurts, I’m being bullied again!”

“Heh, how the mighty Yiling Laozu falls,” Jiang Cheng sniped.

“Fuck you, ChengCheng. That *hurt*. ”

“Good.” Jin Zixuan said, without mercy.

Wei Ying, eyes still closed, turned to his husband. “Lan *Zhan*. ” He said, holding his arms out and pouting. They all knew the flashlight had done no real damage.

“Wei Ying,” Lan Zhan murmured, shielding the torch beam with his sleeve, and tugging Wei Ying against him. Wei Ying snuggled against his chest happily. “I am here. Zixuan, behave.”

"As long as he does," Jin Zixuan agreed, sighing at the blatant PDA. Now they were kissing.

“You two disgust me.” Jiang Cheng muttered, trying his best not to sound fond.

Right as the light went out, however, they heard a skittering. A sound like claws on hardwood. Eerily like a dog’s claws, though Wei Ying would fully admit that he was trying his damndest to *not* think of that right now.

"Jiang Cheng," he whispered anyways, heart rate picking up. It really, truly did sound like dog's claws.

The conversation fell silent. So loud was the sudden nothingness as Wei Ying sharpened his reach that he almost missed the faintest blip in his radar of something, before it disappeared. Something *fast*.

“We all heard that, right?” Jiang Cheng hissed. “I know for a fact there’s supposed to be no one here. Zixuan and I have the only keys for the night.”

“Mn.”

“Yep.”

“Yeah It’s...” Wei Ying trailed off, eyes narrowing. “Not something we’ve dealt with yet, some American spirit. I can feel it move in and out of my sense, like it knows.”

Lan Zhan frowned. “Worrying?”

Wei Ying shared a glance with his brother, and found himself mirroring that feral grin on Jiang Cheng’s face.

“No, it’s fucking exciting.” Jiang Cheng said, then moved to look at the camera. “Hear that fuckers? You might get scarred for life tonight. We haven’t had a good night hunt in fucking ages.”

“I can’t believe I’m suggesting this,” Jin Zixuan muttered, “But we should go deeper. I doubt whatever’s there will approach the fringes of this territory.”

Sharing shrugs and measured looks, they all stepped forward after a tense heartbeat of wordless conversation. Jiang Cheng, Jin Zixuan and Lan Zhan had drawn their swords, the glares reflecting the light of the torch and casting them in a small halo of visible space amongst the cloying darkness.

Unfortunately, Wei Ying thought as he studied the signs of damage in the house, idly cross-referencing it with what he and Jiang Cheng had studied about the history of the house, *Light isn’t what we need right now*.

“Zixuan, turn of the torch,” the Yiling Laozu said, eyes flaring as the creature’s presence heightened the moment the torchlight died. They heard the skittering again, around them, so close but *not there*.

Where? Where the fuck is it--

“Walls!” He hissed, spinning as the sound danced around them. Drawing a quick talisman in blood into the air, Wei Ying sent it *into* the wall. The talisman failed to trace the creature, but they all saw the flare as it snagged on the remnants of something’s trail. “It’s in the fucking walls.”

> HanguangJUUL: Holy shit whet wtf was tha tt
> Cattolyn: The Real Deal™
> 69Sans69: This is why you watch with your lights on

“Fuck,” Jiang Cheng cursed, he and Jin Zixuan instantly falling into a lose four-point peony formation with the rest of them, with Lan Zhan and Wei Ying in the back. “This is some horror movie bullshit. Fucking *bring it*.”

“But why attack now?” Zixuan wondered aloud, as they listened to fainter skittering, further back, like the being was retreating. “So many people have visited. What the fuck does it want now?”

“...life force.” Lan Wangji said into the silence. “Spiritual energy. Most people don’t have a golden core. Most people would be ignored.”

“*Fuck.*” Jiang Cheng snarled. “It couldn’t have been leeching off normal people--”

“--But since you three walked in here like, uh, what is it? Oh! Like Christmas had come early, it definitely upped the ante, hm?” Wei Ying finished, frowning. He replayed the scene in his mind, mapping out possibilities. Considered each and then tossed them away in the span of a blink. Then something else, equally as pressing, became apparent. “A-Cheng,” Wei Ying began, voice low, still thinking. “I think it went after you. It’s going after you. I could feel, earlier, that I’m not the target ... I don’t think it knew I was there, the first time, because if I hadn’t been it’d be you.”

“Actually, it probably thinks we’re the same fucking person.” Jiang Cheng hissed back.

“No,” Lan Wangji objected, stepping forward to feel the wall, frowning. “Wei Ying is a spiritual void. He has none. Jiang Cheng’s energy is lighting. Zixuan’s is tempered steel. I am a calm pool.”

“Lan Zhan, that’s brilliant,” Wei Ying said, spinning to face him and then leaning in to kiss his husband good, ignoring the muffled gagging noises from the other two. “Lan Zhan’s right — it’s going after who looks to have the most, and to a half-sentient thing it looks like Jiang Cheng has the most.”

“Lovely.” Jiang Cheng snarled, with feeling.

They felt quiet for a moment, listening. The house was quiet, and completely dark. Wei Ying felt his metaphorical hackles raise, knowing full well his hair would be floating right now. It was frustrating — this was something they hadn’t encountered before, and as attuned as he was to the resentment of things he knew, he was adapting the parameters of his sensory net to something *different* in real time right now. And whatever it was, it seemed eerily good at dropping the energy it did have low enough to just run under Wei Ying’s radar.

He informed the others of this as they ventured further, speaking softly. He felt the part of him that revelled in the hunt unfurl, and knowing Lan Zhan would remind him to be human, he let his guise slip a bit more. It was dark enough that whatever the camera was catching, it wouldn’t be pointed ears hidden amongst flowing ink hair, or whatever else happened to him. He didn’t like thinking about it too much, even still.

Jiang Cheng was running a current down Sandu’s blade, causing it to hum in a comforting tone. “Does it have to be a human spirit?” Wei Ying’s brother had asked, frowning.

“Wuxian, expand your search to animals, perhaps?” Jin Zixuan suggested. “Or inanimate objects.”

“Yeah,” Wei Ying agreed, doing so, untethering himself from his human shell and letting his conscience wander. Lan Zhan’s hand in his grounded him, comfortingly, but this way he could filter even the most minute of resentful energy changes, though it felt raw. Like he was in a body with the skin peeled off, his senses heightened to a painful amount. *And oh... oh this isn’t good.*

“It’s not animals,” Wei Ying reported, hating that the use of paper talismans would get them in legal trouble due to them being a) unregistered b) accused of being bombs. If only they’d been able to use a trap array on his entire place.... Fuck. “It’s not animals,” he echoed. “It’s something not real, but also once alive? Not a doll, Jiang Cheng.”

“The fuck is it then?” Jiang Cheng said, swishing Sandu around idly.

The four of them looked at each other, pensive, and then it was (surprisingly!) Jin Zixuan who broke the silence.

“It... could be taxidermy.” He admitted, explaining to them the process of skinning dead animals and attaching the fur onto a sculptural shell of sorts, made of whatever craft material, foam, or even plastic or metal was desired. As he explained, Wei Ying simply felt his dread grow.

“That... is terrifying.” Jiang Cheng said sourly, voicing the thought for them all. Lan Zhan looked especially queasy, and Wei Ying held his hand, bringing it up to kiss the knuckles that were nearly white with how tight Lan Zhan was gripping Bichen.

“It’s usually a rich people thing.” Jin Zixuan said, glancing aside.

Jiang Cheng snorted. “No wonder you know of it.”

“Disgusting.” Lan Zhan had said, icy. “Perversion of the animal’s body, abuse and mutilation of the term ‘respect.’”

“Well,” Wei Ying chimed in, making sure to be extra cuddly so Lan Zhan would be less sad about the thought of taxidermied rabbits. “That certainly explains the resentment. Maybe it was mad about what had happened to its body, after death?”

“Could join with the existing spirits of this house, too,” Jiang Cheng pointed out, glaring at the walls. “Assimilated them.”

“Mn. Powerful.”

“So how do we stop it?” Wei Ying mused aloud, still making sure to press kisses to Lan Zhan’s hand, feeling his husband relax minutely under him. He wouldn’t draw attention to Lan Zhan, but he knew this helped. “Think we’ll have to fight it?”

Lan Wanji glanced up like he’d had a thought, and then paused. The others, curious, but understanding, waited. Eventually, Hanguang-Jun said, “Wei Ying should lure it out, we three can trap it.”

Wei Wuxian twirled Chenqing, nodding, then brought his flute up to test a few long, experimental tones. It snagged. Faintly, but it *snagged* the mind, the fractured consciousness of the creature.

Wei Ying grinned. “I can control it. It’s not easy, keeps slipping due to the language barrier, but we’re lucky it’s music. Let’s do this?”

“Might as well,” Jiang Cheng huffed, long-suffering. “Before someone else gets *actually* killed and eaten.”

“Hm. Agreed.” Zixuan said, beginning to charge his sword with spiritual energy. “Camera?”

“On it, on it,” Wei Ying said, excited for the hunt. “Sorry kids,” He chirped to the lens, “This is the part we legally cannot show you live, but we’ll always have our breakdown and summarized recall of the fight later!”

And with that same winning, cheery grin, he turned off the livestream.

> Revvio: WHAT THE FUCK
> Revvio: EVERY F U C K I N G TIME
> MuffinKing: Legal shit is legal shit
> MuffinKing: Let’s wait for the breakdown
> Ayuuyu: What the fuck did i just watch??
> Cattolyn: Actual ghost hunting
> Hgttbght: Best channel honestly
> Hgttbght: The part where he drew in the air with blood? Iconic
> Revvio: FUCKING LET US SEE THE FIGHT
> Cattolyn: Read the legalese in the disclaimer on their blog
> MuffinKing: Yeah it sucks. National secrets be national secrets and all that
> Ayuuyu: What the fuck
> Hgttbght: That was wild though, I can’t wait for the breakdown
> HanguangJUUL: Same bruh that was wild
> Revvio: SAME
> Cattolyn: s a m e
> Ayuuyu: Y'Know what, Same
> Revvio: AYYYYY
> Revvio: ONE OF US ONE OF US
> Cattolyn: This chat is a nightmare
> MuffinKing: Regret modding?
> Cattolyn: All the time
> Cattolyn: All. The. Damn. Time

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“Hey, everyone,” Wei Ying said as the camera focused, now sitting on a luxurious double bed. Lan Zhan sat behind him, dutifully cleaning Bichen. “Well! We’re back at our hotel, not dead, perfectly safe. The Sally House~ What an eventful night, right? We got to experience a very very interesting spook! And the noises from the walls were certainly eerie!”

“Not much actual evidence for the camera,” Jiang Cheng called, offscreen.

“Not that it could be helped,” chimed Jin Zixuan. “Hanguang-Jun was needed on Wanji.”

“Mn,” Lan Zhan agreed, looking up for just a moment. Wei Wuxian shamelessly took that moment to admire his husband’s beauty. “Wangji is my Guqin. Spiritual tool. Played with two hands, or held with one.” He explained, not really explaining at all. Wei Ying *loved him*.

“Yep. Well, that’s why we’re making this a series, anyways! I know most of our videos have been boring lore stuff, but now that COVID is mostly getting handled and places are opening up, we’ll be heading out to explore other actual *locations* now.”

“Road trip.” Lan Zhan agreed. Toneless, but with a small smile. Wei Ying adored how excited he was for this. After a pause he added, “Will learn much.”

“That’s true!” Wei Ying chirped. “We’ve told you about *Chinese* spirits since that's what we grew up with, haha, but now we’ll be heading to check out other things.”

“I think the BuzzFeed Unsolved guys got more evidence than we did,” Jiang Cheng grouched, flopping on the bed with a sigh.

Jin Zixuan nodded. “Jin Ling will be beyond disappointed.”

“Filmed some of the fight. And examination.” Lan Zhan pointed out. “Unreleased, currently. Will add with voiceover.”

“Nothing too juicy, per YouTube gore rules! But perhaps later we can make some kind of spooky highlights reel and hope it doesn’t get taken down,” Wei Ying agreed, leaning against Lan Zhan. “But that’s it for now,” he said, “Help us pick where we should check out next? Tell us in the comments!”

And with a smile, he and Lan Zhan turned the recording off together.

There was silence after, as everyone simply took in the night’s events. It had indeed been a possessed taxidermy animal. A taxidermy raccoon, possessed by an amalgam of ghosts of animal spirits and a little girl named “Sally,” which truly, was a terrifying concept.

Wei Ying had to cut off his connection immediately, trusting the others to handle it. The poor, tortured thing was so spliced together the thoughts were all noise, nearly eldritch in it’s incomprehensibility. It had left him with a splitting headache after, though Lan Zhan had healed most of it by now.

Ultimately, chopping the creature into many small parts with their swords, and then playing *Calming* and *Rest* in a repeated, interwoven duet for Dizi and Guqin had managed to soothe the many spirits. It was slow going, for Wei Ying had to untangle each spirit from the amalgam and then piece them back together, shattered shard by shattered shard, and he definitely looked more dead than alive coming back to himself when it was done. Not in a sore, hollow way - simply in that that was how it was for him now, though after a few moments with Lan Zhan he was feeling far less depleted and infinitely more human.

Then, they’d led a simple purification ceremony, letting the little girl’s spirit (who, really, had simply missed her parents, her family, and wanted desperately to interact with people again) remain. Jiang Cheng, the secret softie, had sprinted on Sandu to fetch a puppy toy from the nearest Dollar Store too. One of those ridiculous looking ones with the sparkly eyes. They’d gifted her the toy, and she’d promised to move on when she thought she could, but that she wanted to say hi to more people first.

Wei Ying, never one to deny a sprinkling of chaos, agreed readily.

Dawn was breaking when they left the house, and as of right now, it was about ten in the morning. All of them were tired, and weary, and, well...

“The plan today is just to sleep in, right?” Wei Ying asked, feeling as though he’d cry if he was asked anything else.

“Yes.” Lan Zhan agreed in a tone that held no room for argument, bending to kiss Wei Ying’s hair.

“Oh good,” Wei Ying said, “Finally.”

“Mn, Wei Ying did good.”

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End Notes

Alrighty~ Lemme know what you all think? Midterms just finished and I needed to get this out. Where should these fools visit next? Who should guest star? Gimme comments, I need sustenance!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!